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**PHOENIX 2003**



# **PHOENIX 2003**

**TRANQUILITY AND CHAOS**

VOLUME 28

Phoenix Literary and Art Magazine  
College of New Rochelle  
29 Castle Place  
New Rochelle, NY 10805



*Phoenix* is the literary and art magazine for the College of New Rochelle. Published annually in the spring of each academic year, this magazine showcases the artistic talents of the College of New Rochelle community. Submissions considered for this publication are accepted from students and faculty in the School of Arts and Sciences and the School of Nursing. All forms of art are welcome. All advertising and submissions for next year's edition can be sent to the following address:

Phoenix Literary and Art Magazine  
College of New Rochelle  
29 Castle Place  
New Rochelle, NY 10805

Correspondance may be sent electronically to: [phoenixcnr@yahoo.com](mailto:phoenixcnr@yahoo.com)

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# **PHOENIX 2003: TRANQUILITY AND CHAOS**

VOLUME 28



## **Executive Editors**

Jessica Hamilton  
Emily Williams

## **Associate Editors**

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Jenell Wilke

## **Art Editor**

Alana Ruptak

## **Layout**

Tara Devlin  
Ayonnah Hudson

## **Recording Secretary**

Tiara Simmons

## **Program Coordinator**

Alisha Mills

## **Print Liason**

Jennifer Molina

## **Staff**

Twana Armstead, Naema Burgess, Claire Fu,  
Natara Hamilton, Jane-Ellen Smith, Javone Williams

## **Advisor**

Dr. Cynthia Kraman

## **Published By**

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New Rochelle, NY 10805

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Student Government Association





## DEAR READER,

This has been both a year of joyous celebration and a year of worried anticipation. We have shared each other's triumphs and comforted each other in our times of failure. This continuously evolving wheel of emotions and events has been, and for some of us will continue to be, our college experience. As college women we strive during our academic years to create and maintain a standard of excellence for ourselves. However, all of the organizing, academic rigor, volunteer work, residence life and extracurricular activities can make any person feel as if she has been thrust into an ocean of chaos. At these times of confusion many of us find order in the tranquility of creating and enjoying literature and art.

Writing poetry has been my serene connection to the world and to my inner peace. As you read the diverse works of the featured artists in this edition, refine your creative style and discover new facets of a deeper aesthetic consciousness.

Our love, our pain, our elation, our commitment, our friendships, our introspection, our sincerity nourish this arena of expression. We stand, as dynamic individuals, somewhere between the extremes of order and chaos upon a tranquil canvas interrupted by our presence. Our delayed reaction to the urgent plea of tranquility has drawn us into a vortex of chaos only escapable by a maintained grip on the nurturing hand of tradition. Whether we are ready or not we must face the reality that we cannot stop...rewind...and reverse this paradox.

As a publication we are the lifeline seeking only higher excellence in what we produce. It is our privilege to share your journey through. I hope that you will be inspired and changed by the works featured in this year's edition.

I would like to thank all of the artists and writers who contributed their works. Your truest essence is conveyed through your works and without you this publication would not exist. To the diligent and dependable staff of Phoenix, your hardwork has not gone unnoticed. Thank you to all that have taught me how truly chaotic this world can be. Even greater thanks to those who have helped me not only survive but thrive in the intense presence of chaos.

*-Jessica Elexis Hamilton, Executive Editor*



**DEAR READER,**

The impulse to communicate to oneself, to others and to the world is the driving force of human expression. Here, within these pages, we invite you to share in witnessing the unfolding of human expression through the written word and visual images captured by the writer's ink, pencil, or keyboard and the artist's paint, charcoal, computer instruments, or camera lens. Whatever form of media the writer or artist chooses the personal vision of each emerges through her words, her drawings, heightening our awareness and acutely drawing our attention towards yet another facet of the human experience. We channel our experiences, our encounters, our observations, our conflicts, our joys, and our questions and present them as a springboard for others to respond and react to. In reading and viewing the publication individual voices begin to audibly surface from the pages. The silence breaks as communication is made.

Times of turbulent chaos rampant with rough currents intersect with a sense of order, tranquility and peace. Yet again, a communication is made between chaos and order, further intensifying our lives and influencing our creations. The paradoxical relationship between the turbulent chaos and the tranquil order informs our lives and our work.

May the contents of our publication reveal the dynamic nature of the impulse to create and propel you to communicate in a form that appeals and speaks to you.

My gratitude to our hardworking staff who put forth tremendous effort and dedication to make this publication possible. Many thanks to Dr. Kraman and Dr. Smart for your assistance in editing and unwavering guidance. And lastly, thanks to all of our contributing writers and artists, your words, your artwork, and renderings of your individual experience reveal the impulse to create and communicate powerful messages.

*-Emily Dawn Williams, Executive Editor*



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THE POET MUST DIE  
*Richelle Fiore*

(FOR E.W. AND N.S.)

Words blend into another to create  
The landscape of the world  
London life beckons from the  
Encased flesh of one soul to  
Its twin.

Gender blends as they merge, he  
Melting into the psyche of her  
Alas, the exhuberence of this  
Moment must yield to the  
Truth that separates them.

The poet must die  
For the other to  
Live. One taps into the  
Recesses of the *chora*, that  
Yearns to escape.

He says it is too hard,  
The Greek birds sing and  
Urns taunt us.

“The rules” are echoed  
Through the caverns of his,  
Her, their and *my* mind.  
We plunge with the lark in  
Morning, hoping to survive the  
Day. Passions burn on un-kissed lips  
As the song dies within.

The poet must die so the other  
Can live—sublimated in the beauty  
And passion of life,  
Distilled, collected, and read.



**REDISTRIBUTION**

*Alana Ruptak*

bundles of massed produced emotions  
fill me inner holes  
caves carved out by you.  
you.  
and only you forever.  
they connect  
rewire their circuits  
to my veins  
redistribution of love



**REDISTRIBUTION (PAINTING)**

*Alana Ruptak*



UNTITLED (PHOTOGRAPH)

*Emily Williams*







**SMALL BLACK BOX**  
*Zina Dias*

Small black box upon the shelf  
Words etched in your mat surface  
Nothing special really.  
Wire connected to the wall  
Connected to you  
Connected to me  
As I push your buttons, play your games and give more time.  
Give more time to facing foes and defeating monsters,  
Give more time to beating bad guy and solving puzzles  
But don't win because you can't win  
Not really.  
Open another plastic case  
Expose another myriad of color trapped in a circular disk  
Play again.  
Finish one game, begin another  
Until the new wears off  
The boredom sets in  
Or the mind simply begins to long for a new diversion.  
Flick the switch in the back and the fan slows.  
The room grows quiet.  
The black box that provided so much joy becomes a rectangle of plastic upon the shelf.



## TORN

*Tiara L. Simmons*

Torn in half by the emotions of man  
 I long to be happy, gleeful, gay.  
 But my humanness pleads with me to stay torn.  
 Out of my eyes fall tears  
 Tears contaminated by  
 The blood of a torn soul.  
 And then, I am torn between  
 Good and evil  
 And who wins the battle?

## JUST MY THOUGHTS

*Natara P. Hamilton*

I worry, I worry about the homeless and the alone, the sick, the tired, the scared, and the weak. I worry about New York. I worry about the children, the dead, the dying, AIDS, cancer, and pain. I worry about the heartless, the hungry, the evil and the quiet ones. I worry about my brothers. I worry about the drugs, the crime, my boyfriend, the baby and myself. I worry about my mother. And as I watch the streets roll by all I can think about is the uncertainty, the fear, the pain and the questions. All I feel is the sadness, the tears, the whats and the whys. The love. And I still feel like crying as I watch the crippled bum thank me for the McDonald's hamburger I gave her and the left over iced tea the guy next to me gave her thanking me, and as we share a look and a smile I think about the bastard that hurt her and the chicken I threw away before I left my house, I think about the bum while riding on the train.



QUESTION

*Ayannah Hudson*

You said I am not ready.

Ready to endure true love.  
Ready to be engulfed in you rapture...  
Of intense love making sessions,  
That curl my perfectly permed hair.

You said I am not ready.

Ready to for those mind blowing conversations,  
That leave me with mental orgasms.  
Ready to look in your eyes and read behind the lines.

You said I am not ready.

Ready to admit when I am wrong.  
Ready to give myself to you a hundred percent.  
Ready to not let peoples interjections,  
Mess up our affection.

You said I am not ready.

Yes, I admit.  
I am not yet ready for it all.  
But the question I ask of you is,  
When I am ready...

Will you still be there, or is that question unfair?



**[MY GAIT HAS BECOME..]**

*Zina Dias*

My gait has become much like that of Quasimodo but it  
is short term so I don't mind  
It is the act of struggling this suitcase around after  
me that has made me walk thusly  
In my current state I am not only clumsy but surly as  
well.  
Wedging my overstuffed suitcase on the floor I briefly  
consider the over head rack  
However my mind quickly becomes filled with the image  
of me being crushed  
I can clearly see me loosing my balance tipping  
backwards and getting squashed.  
As graceful of a drunken moose I flop down into the  
seat quickly scrapping the idea  
Shifting my legs into an odd gap legged position  
around my bag I wait for the conductor  
Whom I know is approaching by the click click sound he  
is making with the ticket puncher.  
Chanting tickets like an odd mantra he continues on  
his way past my seat without pause  
For a moment I sit still like some small woodland  
creature when a predator comes too close  
Not being honest enough to call him back I watch him  
until he disappears from the car.  
Turning to the window I stare out with eyes that have  
the capacity to see but choose not to  
This trip will blend with all of the others like it,  
nothing extraordinary in the scenery outside  
Only that blending of the colors outside the glass to  
remind me that I'm moving fast  
But I'm really not moving at all.  
My thoughts are centered around my will to not sleep  
bouncing around and never settling  
Running from the pneumonia that has sprung up in Hong  
Kong, to my friend in Canada





To the phone in my breast pocket that I know will ring  
before my trip has ended.  
Someone wanting to know where I am, how close I am or  
how far away  
Someone asking what my destination is or why I decided  
to go there or how often I go  
Someone asking if I can go there or here or jump  
through this hoop or that while en route.  
I stare blankly out the window waiting for the phone  
to ring  
Waiting for the movement to stop concentrating on a  
point in the horizon that I cannot see  
Yet I know that it is there just as I know that one  
day my motion will cease.



UNTITLED (PHOTOGRAPH)

*Heidi L. Hughes*



**SOLDIERS (PHOTOGRAPH)**

*Ingrid Staats*



**[BODIES]**

*Sophia Domeville*

Bodies  
 Brown,  
 Black,  
 Yellow,  
 Gold,  
 Silken smooth by the sun.  
 The scent of cocoa butter around the grooves of  
 Widened hips,  
 Plucked lips  
 And almond shaped eyes.  
 Legs long thickened thighs by  
 The sweat of cotton fields, sugar cane and rice.  
 A gasp of movement stirred the trees  
 Drums blaring  
 Hands pounding  
 Ears piercing  
 The Trees.....  
 Hands flaring  
 Feet stomping  
 Blood dripping  
 The Trees.....  
 Filling, soiling the earth with our blood.  
 The blood of our Ancestors,  
 Bought  
 Stolen  
 Killed  
 And Raped.  
 Nourish us  
 The Trees...  
 Our Trees have seen, heard, lost and forgotten.  
 Limped forward with sorrow.  
 A grief not only the roots grow  
 But surge toward life  
 A life not only of ours  
 But the dreams of our Ancestors  
 Silence....  
 The Trees speak.....



**ARABÈSQUE**

*Richelle Fiore*

Parallel and perpendicular fly across the plane  
Adagio, petit allegro, assemblé  
Scrape, twist, balançorie  
Gasping. heartwrenching, spectacular.

O how we are more than lines and paint,  
Solid shapes and graceful riots of color.  
Muted cyan, wheat, and pink.

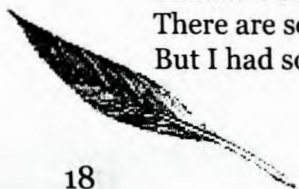
Open wounds mar when crimson stains satin,  
Flesh upon the barr as we  
wear expressionless masks.

The siren Tchaikovsky beckons  
As the movement is called out in beats  
Rond de jambe in unison with  
Taffeta circling until the lid is closed.

**[I WOULD'VE GONE IT ALONE]**

*Jenell Wilkie*

I would've gone it alone  
If we weren't so powerful as a team  
If I could've strong-armed my past  
And not on your shoulders have to lean  
But things change...  
So, I won't lean on you now  
I'm strong enough to stand on my own  
I don't need you in my life  
My desires were over-blown  
I simply enjoyed being the splash of yellow to your gray  
Was drawn in as the purple for your haze  
And lusted as the henne for you to ssey  
That we fit together.... you and me  
But that need was really dire desire  
Still..... I'll miss you now like pen misses paper  
There are so many sheets around  
But I had so much more fun...writing with you.

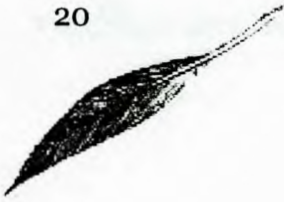






**BALLET SLIPPERS (PHOTOGRAPH)**

*Sarah Nash*



## BARE-ASSED TRUTH

*Angela Turnan*

1

They weren't my words anyway  
In that note  
I almost gave you  
The one you couldn't read  
I don't know why  
I can't just talk to you  
Can't seem to grow  
That goddamned seed

And when you called  
Me on the phone  
My mind just went  
totally  
fucking  
blank...  
I wasn't prepared  
For your inquiry  
But I still knew  
What you were gonna say

So I'm sorry I was shady  
When you called and asked  
If it was me  
But I knew  
That you knew  
I mean,  
Who else did you think it would be?

2

The truth is that  
I'm scared of you  
How you feel  
And what you think  
Of me  
Another truth  
Is that I'm feelin' you  
And I was hoping  
That you'd see...  
That you'd see  
A few things my way  
Cuz' I've been thinking,  
Really  
How bad could it actually be?

Ok...hold on...let's see...

Now you know  
That I've been thinking  
And my thinking  
Is as simple as this...  
I wanna know  
More about you  
Like all those things  
We haven't quite mentioned yet  
Like...

Do you like to be kissed  
Just as often as I do?  
Just as often as  
I'd like  
To be kissing you?

Well, I guess what I meant was...



3

Would you like me  
To hold you  
Like the way I've been telling you  
With my eyes  
That I'd like to?  
And do you wanna know more  
Know more about us  
Just like I do?  
Cuz' I'm gonna be bold  
And say that something  
Yeah...  
Something told me you do  
And the bare-assed truth is  
That I can't  
I just can't  
Help but like you...  
Whew!

So I guess what I meant to say was...

If these were the things  
I decided to tell you  
What is it that  
You think you would say?  
Cuz' I might not  
Be your style  
And still be  
Worth your while  
I just might be an acquired taste

4

But we seem good together  
And I see room for better  
And maybe,  
Just maybe  
You can even show me your face  
Cuz' I've been dying to ask you  
Don't mind if I do  
If you think you'd just might  
Like to stay  
And I'm not saying forever  
Nor  
"Let's grow old together"  
I'd be happy just to get  
The time of day

So I guess what I'm telling you is...

Maybe the time of one day  
Could turn into two or three  
Maybe you could slip  
Into my arms  
And maybe,  
Just maybe  
You could get used to me

An' I know you catch me looking  
With my slick little  
Sidelong glance  
But you can't seem  
To hear me thinking  
See the coin my mind is flipping  
On whether or not  
I should take this chance





ONCE IN A TIME.

i love. i love. I'm so beautiful  
you say and say and say and  
you look only at my skin. but it  
is that which courses through  
my veins -that burns it red that  
i love. a flame-my core.  
recirculation. i paint you into  
my canvas. i love. i love. you  
love what is beneath my skin-  
you are my blood- my sustain-  
ing juice.

ONCE IN A TIME.  
(PAINTINGS)

*Alana Ruptak*





**J DID***Jessica Elexis Hamilton*

Evident between eyes that meet is temptation  
Ripe lips to plump lips in invitation  
Give me death...let me live  
Near you...in you...even closer  
A promise of fulfilling tomorrow  
Confirmed as I taste you now  
Sweet as still your sweat left on my lips now  
Overriding restraint with temptation  
Suggestion to manifest fantasy tomorrow  
Event past celebrated too late for invitation  
Wanting you...needing you to be closer  
Lady of the night let me live  
Pleasure me with presence and I'll live if only long enough to feel you now  
Breathing your skin...bathing in you...wearing you closer  
There's no negation to temptation  
Pleading eyes as invitation  
Not to wait until tomorrow  
I can go on until tomorrow  
In the day, night will live  
Grasping hands write invitation  
If we put pen to paper now  
Calligraphy on my inner thigh cries temptation  
Screaming for you to move closer  
Fear of the unknown keeps me from coming closer  
Resistance may be none tomorrow  
My heart...my throbbing skin won't withstand temptation  
In another, one will live  
Lost moments...stolen minutes even now  
Time steals itself and negates invitation  
Action before thought gave invitation  
Minutes merging in two minds moving closer  
We can not stop the force that moves us now  
Becoming you and I and we tomorrow  
Identical essence will emerge and live  
United with temptation  
Let me extend the invitation for tomorrow  
To get even closer as we live  
Together we are now...tomorrow will bring new temptation





## OPEN YOUR EYES

*Cheryl Billingslea*

Embracing the unfamiliar allowing chance to lead,  
Allowing myself to be open before age impedes.  
Absorbing lessons from others,  
Strangers and poets pass,  
While undulating in a stream of memories of which few will surely last.  
I bask in esthetics while time changing brilliance shines,  
Before on me youth pulls its inevitable blinds.  
In something simple I see so much more,  
For I'm looking through the confusion,  
Straight to its core.  
If emptiness awaits, I refuse to comply,  
Because appearances frequently have a tendency to lie.  
Can you see it?  
I know it's hard,  
But if you strain it might become clearer,  
The true soul that lies within,  
Worth more than the reflection in the mirror.



**LIGHT AND DARK (PHOTOGRAPH)**

*Tara Devlin*

**T. W.**

*Temí Fawole*

I'd never really talked about it,  
 I guess I just blocked it out of my mind.  
 He was my first true friend,  
 He was the one I'd lost forever.  
 We use to sit together on road trips,  
 He used to tell me the funniest things.  
 When I'd do something embarrassing,  
 He would do something to cover up my embarrassment.  
 We used to color together,  
 We used to eat together  
 But the only regret I have is not saying thanks.  
 Thanks for the laughs.  
 Thanks for the cries.  
 Thanks for the excitement.  
 On the day of our graduation,  
 We had already parted.  
 While I was getting my speech ready,  
 You were getting ready for something else,  
 Something far more important than my speech.  
 As I read the last part of my speech  
 You took your last deep breath.  
 As I closed my eyes to acknowledge the crowd,  
 You closed your eyes to acknowledge GOD.  
 As I walked down the aisle back to my seat,  
 You walked down the aisle to sit down by GOD.  
 I heard about it,  
 I already knew,  
 That I had lost one true friend to AIDS.





**THE DAY BEFORE CANCER**

*Ewa Tabak*

How does it feel

Not to feel

?

**MISS HAVISHAM LIVES NEXT DOOR**

*Emily Dawn Williams*

Ancient garments  
Wrinkled parchment of magazine clippings from the past  
Unfinished paintings adorn the narrow hallways  
The human figure left untouched  
Unconsumed by any trace of color or interior indication of line... of form  
Empty  
As if the framework of the human spirit is void  
Women depicted as invisible  
Merely an outline  
Void of memories  
Fibers of life severed  
The scent of cigarette smoke permeates her space  
Clouds the access to the primary layers  
Saturates vision with a guise  
Veiled eternally by an intangible distance  
She has formed a barrier  
That cannot be broken  
Though at rare, elusive moments  
She slightly lifts her veil  
And allows one to capture a minute segment  
Of her intricate, infinite number of parts  
Her design repels absorption  
Wrinkles contour her features  
Elegantly etching a sketch of her life upon her face  
Evident of a life comprised of Moments  
Heavy and Weeping  
Light and Laughing  
Impressions of her primary layers  
Begin to surface as a smile unfolds and a laugh sounds  
Reverberates and sustains  
As the wrinkles journey in their sacred space





## THE NUMBNESS

*Jennifer M. Smith*

A subliminal message lies in every thought spoken  
 A lie is the truth with accessories  
 All matching the outfit of what's really happening  
 We are bombarded with fictional images  
 Believing the lies spoken from the lips of cold hearted predators  
 Our bodies no longer feel sympathy for those less fortunate  
 Passing the dirty clothed "bum" on the street asking for change  
 Turning the channel when an infomercial asks you to feed the hungry children  
 Deleting the email pleading with you to save the African women from being  
 stoned  
 To Death  
 There is no substitute for the truth  
 And it needs no explanation  
 Either it is or it isn't  
 And we have treaded far from the shores of humanity  
 Neither feeling nor caring about one another  
 Polluting our bodies with Happy man-made medicines  
 Designed to make us feel good  
 But we can't

## UNTITLED (CHARCOAL DRAWING)

*Amy Perry*



## FLICKERING LIGHTS

*Clotilde Joanne Famiglietti*

Flickering lights,  
What do they mean?  
They transport me back,  
Back to a time of pain.

Flickering lights,  
I can't tell if this is a dream  
Or not.

Feelings engulf me.  
I feel alone.  
These flickering lights,  
Will they stop?

I walk down a corridor,  
White walls deserted.  
I can no longer tell  
Where it is I am,  
Where I'm supposed to be.

Yet the flickering lights persist,  
Transporting me...  
Hospital. School. Hospital.  
School. Hospital. School.

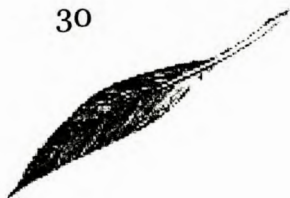
Images plague me,  
Horrible cries surround me.  
Machines everywhere.  
Oh God tell me this is a dream.  
Tell me I'm not alone.  
Please stop these flickering lights!





**SOUTH WASHINGTON BRIDGE**  
**(PHOTOGRAPH)**

*Heidi L. Hughes*



## PHOTOGRAPHED SKIN

*Jessica Elexis Hamilton*

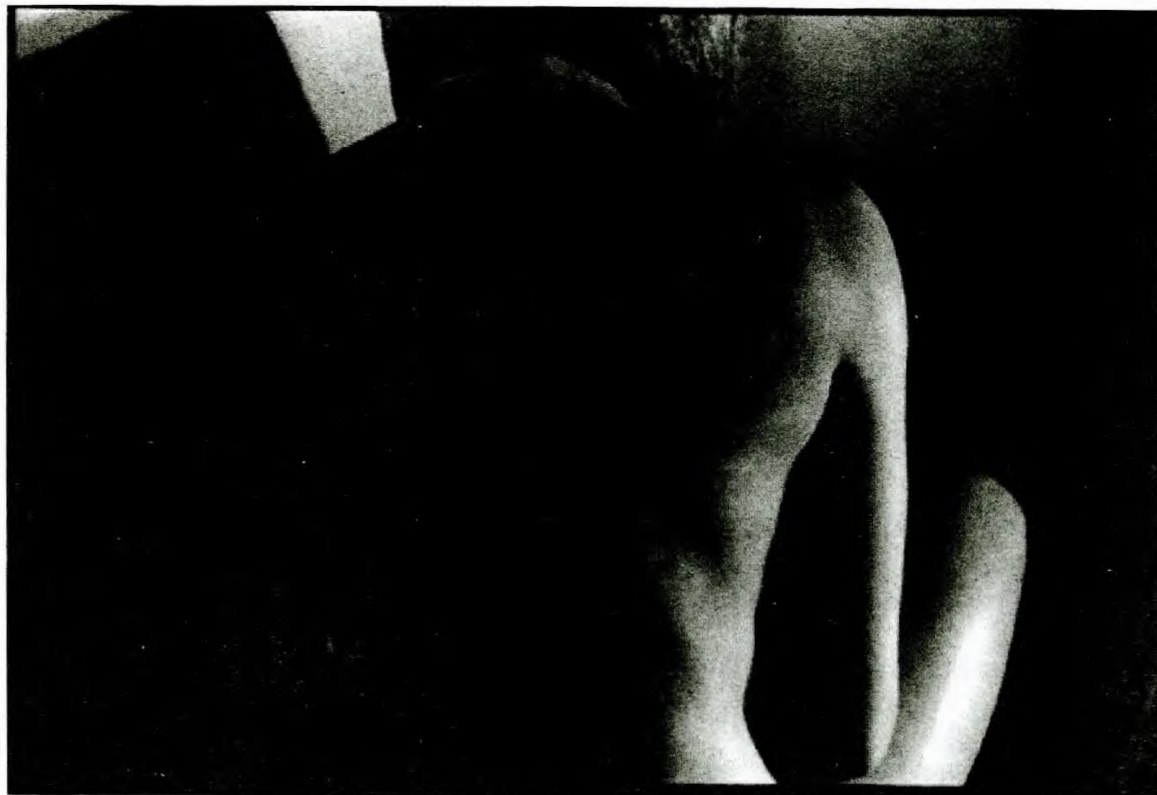
Light shadows darkness  
 The truth's presence  
 its present  
 photographed skin  
 her body as love  
 embodiment  
 comfort in blackness  
 blind to the script on the skin  
 her body as art unseen  
 pages exist in the mind  
 dissolving the truth behind her  
 pages exist in the heart  
 tears dilute the truest words  
 erasing only the happiness  
 that never negated pain  
 pain pours onto pages  
 soaking tear-blurred lines into  
 an abstract photograph  
 take words to her advantage  
 show her something unseen  
 dilute this lie into meaning

## UNDRESSED 10 (PHOTOGRAPH)

*Jessica Elexis Hamilton*







# UNDRESSED 6 (PHOTOGRAPH)

*Jessica Elexis Hamilton*

Cry for the gray in the horizon  
 Invoke Eos and Selene  
 In calm hours after midnight  
 They exist here together  
 Let them live on her body in beauty  
 Let them war on her body in silence  
 Take her words violently  
 Innocence never had success  
 Give her the gift of a hard heart  
 A cynical mind to concentrate the generic  
 Create misery to breed happiness  
 Infant cries of innocence...smothered by words  
 Shower the inner self  
 The poetry of romantics  
 The cry of an emergency room  
 After midnight  
 Stars and moons fade over curves  
 Let her exist  
 Real  
 Take the stars out of her eyes  
 And slash her inhibition  
 Bleed her inner self  
 Chemistry drips down naked legs  
 She will fall in love with you  
 The only part in her  
 She loves about herself



**[INHALE!]**

*Margarita Ganeva*

Inhale!

Inhale,

in vain,

again

!

Again wry corners into twisted canvass  
Pressing in,  
the dripping ducts reverberate the strain.

Cerebral genuflection,  
Knots of the scourging rain

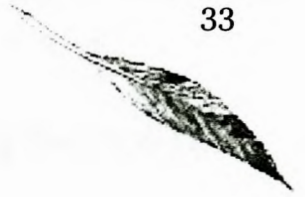
Perpetuated incubation,  
hallucinating rays of spring.

Nerve collision  
suffocates the vision  
mutes the gesture,  
to  
crush the voice  
in stacked lethargic droplets!  
Dispersed dandelion  
Corroding veins  
The imprints of oblivion  
Taste of rust  
Regenerate the whispers of crescendo  
Persist in dust  
Shrill cuts of innuendo.

Trespassing the Geometry of delusions  
Unfolded intersections  
Arrangements of suffusion.







My emptiness refurbished,  
Undone before conception.  
Your solitude redeemed,  
unplugged before connection.  
Undream !

Untouch !

Ungrow !

Unpain !

Genetic barcode ?  
Lost in the process!  
What's your channel?  
Oops, forgot my number!

Recess!

Unlikely recollections of faces never known, places  
never been.

Inhale

invain

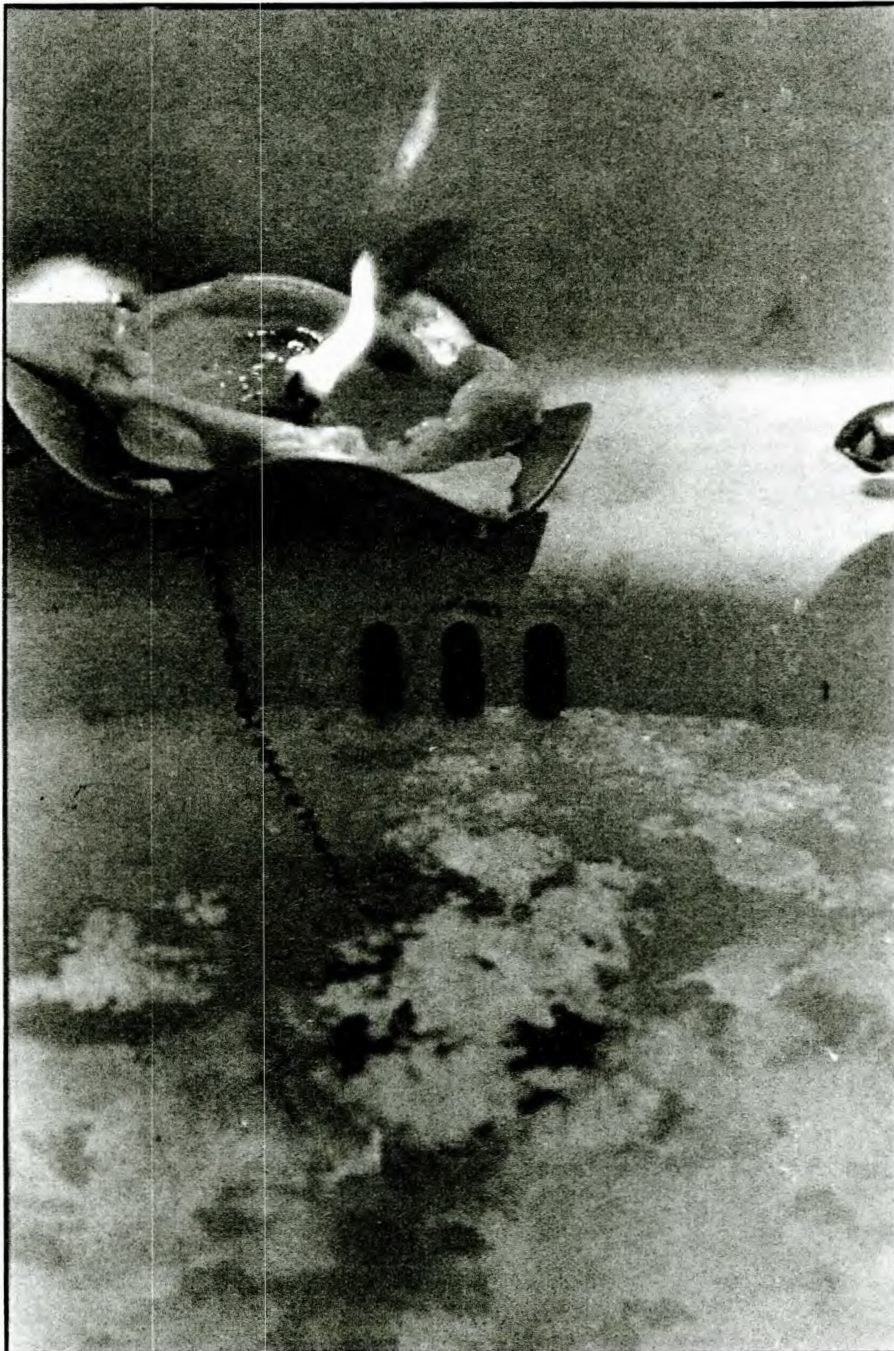
Pulled deep

Deeper

down the drain!

UNTITLED (PHOTOGRAPH)

*Priscilla Ventura*







## DECEMBER THOUGHTS

*Alana Ruptak*

And now I can realize why people have given up on love. It is in the atmosphere too easily breathed in, inhaled by all who seek, all who say. You utter the word, the L, O, V, and E and your lungs expand. Where does the heart fit in? capacity grows, your cells reform, your genetic makeup rewrites itself to spell the name of your lover, lovers. You alter your perception, the pupil, the iris regenerates new surfaces that only see their face, that only see their skin, that seems to cover every surface, fill every crevice. Making it all seem so beautiful. Life is made beautiful by love or is beautiful merely one of the rewrites. Written codes, B.E.A.U.T.I.F.U.L. rose colored glasses some call it, rose colored diluted blood which courses rich in nutrients of love the atmospheric pressure waters down, waters down the juices. Diluted from too much "I'm sorry," "I never meant to hurt you" "I'm just not ready" residue. Watered down by living in the moment. I come up for air but instead of expanding my lungs capacity shrinks. I suffocate from lack of purity, I drown in lost infatuation, more than friendship, my esophagus closes, cuts off from the words used a hundred times, out a hundred mouths. I die a soulmate to them all and all alone.

## ALL THAT I AM

*Qiana Nunez*

I am the chameleon-creature of no definite shape or color  
 Blending in has never been a difficult pastime  
 I am the scorpion- dangerous to all those around me  
 When the time is right, I'll know when to attack  
 Yet I am the vulture- bird of death  
 I dine among the dead, for they make easy prey  
 I am the lion- bow down to me now  
 As king of all animals, I stand before you all  
 Still I am nothing more than a child-  
 A little being filled with emotions not of my own;  
 But of the ones I took so much from  
 Like the biggest thief of souls  
 And in the end: I am the greatest fool  
 Rejected by all those I thought I conquered, then left behind.



## WITHERED MEMORIES

*Cheryl Billingslea*

Everyday I wake up  
I look out my Window and see you  
My beautiful Mahogany rose  
That gives Hell hope  
To  
My graveyard life  
And these bleeding tears a smile  
Layers upon layers dreams are wrapped  
Desire and realization embedded in your rich core  
My beautiful Mahogany rose  
Time has ascended past your thorny nest of character  
Your leaves have waved passed fanned, provoking  
splendor and truth  
Pains no true pain that hasn't been earned  
Hurt me again  
Just please  
Don't  
Leave  
My beautiful Mahogany rose  
Your intoxicating scent wreaks havoc on a seasonless  
mind  
Mentally catastrophic, are your recipes  
Mixing passion and goodness with  
Indifferent deceit  
Oh how exquisite, are the lies you tell of love  
Fictitious love controls my passion of fear  
Don't make me beg  
My beautiful Mahogany rose  
You engulf my thoughts, which are aroused by  
Your rich consistency  
My innocence is wrapped around your stem  
Engorged inevitability renders  
Me  
Foolish  
My beautiful Mahogany rose  
Your splendid gifts of lies  
My reality  
Tell me a tale





**CHILDHOOD (PHOTOGRAPH)**

*Heidi L. Hughes*



## REFLECTIONS IN THE SAND

*Elisa Ann French*

I see two people on the sand,  
and they start walking hand in hand.  
I look up and what do I see?  
but memories of you and me.

I long for those days of the past,  
and wish.... they'd always last.  
but I know they'll never be,  
Everlasting eternally.

I hold onto all my thoughts and dreams;  
but none come true for me it seems.  
For, if they did; it would be you and me;  
and not a past memory.

I want to be those on the sand,  
Together walking hand in hand.  
In love the way we used to be,  
Together for an eternity!

## UNTITLED 19

*Samneang Sin*

Somewhere along this lonely, dark path  
I look around, hoping that you would catch my hand and  
pull me, guiding me to safety.  
Somewhere along the deserted, old path  
I stop and look whereabouts; finding nothing, I cry  
and weep quietly.  
Somewhere along this strangely long path.  
I stoop down and feel my energy at loss; giving up the  
reason to continue.  
And somewhere along this path  
I still get up without you, reaching the white light  
at the end.





STILL LIFE (PAINTING)

*Jing Jin*





## MY FREEDOM

*Naeema Burgess*

I'm never going back to Mas'a to be enslaved.  
Of course not, I've got My Freedom now.

I was blessed with My Freedom on a clear, beautiful night in March.  
It wasn't too hot, nor was it too cold, it was just right, and so was My Freedom.  
My Freedom was tall, strong, and more beautiful than  
Anything I have ever known, saw, tasted, touched, heard, or smelled.

I'm never going back to Mas'a to be enslaved.  
Of course not, I've got My Freedom now.

I traveled the Underground Railroad to find My Freedom.  
The journey was a very long and dark road and times I felt scared and all alone,  
But My Harriet Tubman led my path.  
My Harriet Tubman kept a close eye on me and kept me strong.

I'm never going back to Mas'a to be enslaved.  
Of course not, I've got My Freedom now.

When my journey was over and I finally reached My Freedom,  
I knew that the sweat, tears, hard work, and pain had all paid off.  
Come to think of it, all of my trials before I was blessed with My Freedom prepared me,  
For this joyous feeling that I continuously feel.

I'm never going back to Mas'a to be enslaved.  
Of course not, I've got My Freedom now.

My Freedom's voice reassures me every moment that I hear its sweet whisper in my ear.  
My Freedom, I am yours forever, you don't have to worry about losing me.  
My Freedom, please, dismiss your fear.  
I'm never going back to Mas'a to be enslaved.  
Of course not, I've got My Freedom now.

My Freedom and I have been the best of friends for some time now.  
Sometimes I feel like I have had My Freedom my whole life; that is how close we are.  
We have a mutual bond and understanding, the strongest that I have ever witnessed.  
We deserve each other, we are a perfect team.

I'm never going back to Mas'a to be enslaved.  
Of course not, I've got My Freedom now.



## FYI

*Jenell Wilkie*

For your information  
 I've known you far too long  
 Done far too much  
 Gone far too far  
 For your information  
 I have had enough  
 It used to be fun  
 Speaking to you, seeing you  
 And all the things we did  
 But for your information  
 A new time has come  
 I'm beginning to have doubts  
 What was it all really for  
 Temporary solutions no longer work out  
 Your distance leaves a void, without a doubt  
 I can no longer continue  
 To feel the way that I do  
 For your information  
 Yes, I want to be with you

## I WISH

*Jenell Wilkie*

Sometimes I wish

That the sun would take a vacation  
 And the night would stand in suspended animation  
 'Cause that would allow me more time with you  
 And not have you leave me saddened and blue

Sometimes I wish

That you were more than my lover but my man  
 And I'd find the words to make you understand  
 When I'm wrapped in your arms how I feel  
 How you fill my heart with zeal

Sometimes I wish

That you could give me everything I've been waiting on  
 And you'd write it in a verse or sing it in a song  
 'Cause to you I'm so addicted  
 And if put on trail I'd be convicted

Sometimes I wish

That the man of my dreams were real

Sometimes I wish

That the man of my dreams were you

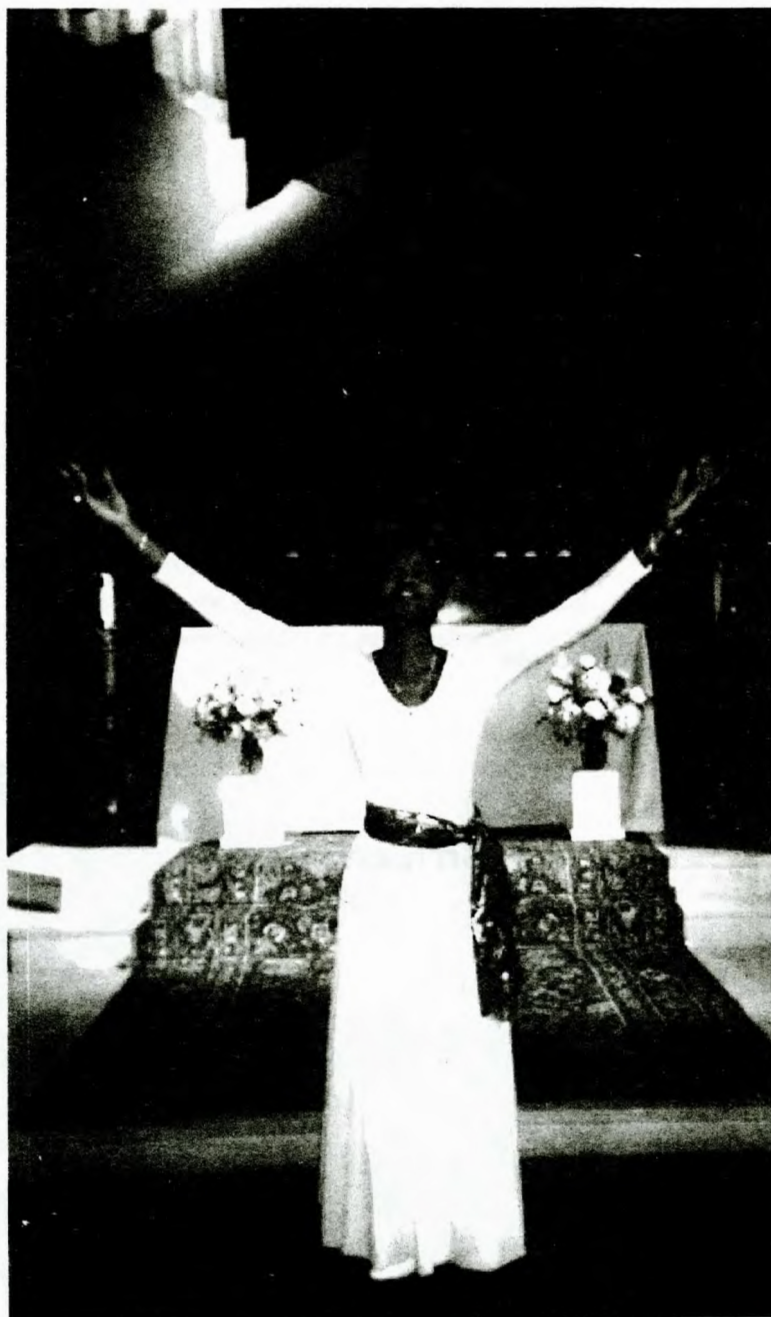


**PERSONA**

*Keisha Smith*

She tends to her through silent  
Attention, discreet but present  
Poised tall  
She walks around the room  
Around the girl and her hard beating heart  
Smile wide with pearl white teeth  
She looks at her  
Anxious  
Then look away  
Gaze out the window  
Onto busy streets  
And plays with her curly hair  
She must have thought she needed a haircut  
Long, black strands falling  
Off her head and to the tiled floor  
To her feet where she stands  
Shorter hair brings out her round face  
And draws attention to full lips  
The young girl shifts comfortably in the booth  
Felt her  
Paying attention to her nature  
Dark skinned, with smooth sinister eyes  
She asks what she wants to order  
Foreign accent spilling out of her mouth  
Lipstick smeared mahogany  
Slender within her clothes  
And long legs that end high heeled  
Barbered short hair leaps off the top  
Her shadows contrast with white shirt  
Black and white  
She takes another sip of her beer  
Stared at the flickering candle  
In the center of the table  
Noticed her watching every motion  
Eyes cemented into her round face  
Lose contact  
Concentrate  
Hide admiration  
She approaches with food  
For thought  
For gods and goddesses  
Smile, tell her thank you





**PERSONA: PRAISE AND WORSHIP THROUGH JAZZ BALLET**

*Tiffani Blake*

*Ingrid Staats*

PHOENIX 2003



## MY PEOPLE

*Tiara L. Simmons*

My people are a colorful people,  
A diverse people.  
My people are an educated people  
An intellectual people.

My people come as dark as onyx  
And are just as precious.  
My people come as brown as chocolate  
And are just as sweet.

My people come as tan as the Sahara sands  
And are just as intriguing.  
My people come as golden as the sun  
And are just as bright.

My people are a colorful people  
A diverse people  
I am proud of my people.

## BITTERSWEET

*Geisha Osborne*

Oh joyful days and joyful nights  
When all was well and all was right  
You stood by me  
And I grew strong  
You comforted me  
You gave me a hand  
Now that those days  
Have passed us by  
We dwell on them  
As we say our goodbyes  
For that was then  
And this now  
So remember those days  
And remember those nights  
And exchange a silent prayer for me  
Under the starlight



**BURSTING AT THE SEAMS**

*Sophia Domeville*

My soul quenches for the thirst of life,  
Fevers for the heat of love  
Breaks for attention,  
Spirit.  
My spirit crumbles down to the tears of joy.  
Leaps for appraisal.  
Quenching for something more,  
Something pure, untainted,  
Unused love.  
A glimmer of happiness to shine,  
Lighten the darkness that still stands around me.

How do you let go pain that still lives with you?  
Crawls behind every step you take.  
Darkens your shadows, your eyes and blackens your soul.  
Chills the air to a bitter sweet memory and distorts the truth.  
Causing great pain and despair.



**UNTITLED (PHOTOGRAPH)**

*Priscilla Ventura*





RUS (INTAGLIO WITH AQUATINT)

INGRID STAATS





## EVERYDAY

*Jennifer M. Smith*

Everyday she comes into this shop  
Always looking for the same thing.  
Everyday she wears a smile on her face  
Except for today.  
She picks up her everyday item and puts it on the counter.  
I smile, say Good Morning, but she only nods solemnly.  
She pulls out her money and lays it on the counter.  
I want so much to tell her everything will be all right, but I don't.  
She picks up her item and walks out the store.  
I never see her again.

## HOPE

*Clotilde Joanne Famiglietti*

If birds could sign until the end of the earth,  
If the sun could shine down on us for just as long,  
We'd live in happiness for all of our lives.  
If the stars shone down upon us every night  
If we learned the song our heart longed to sing  
We'd live in an eternity to play its tune.  
A melody so sweet as ever before been heard.

Yet the birds have lost their song  
And the sun has lost its luster.  
The happiness we crave has passed us by.  
The stars are as far from us as they appear  
And the song, an indistinguishable hum.  
All around us hope and dreams have died an  
Ungrateful death even just now as the last beat slowly fades  
As one question lingers  
How can we ignore it?



## SURVIVAL

*Surena Simpson*

Sister, be a solider with me  
    Show your strength  
And defend your womanhood  
Against the other women as well as men  
Keep on rising begin to shine don't let depression  
    Be your demise

Sister, be a solider with me  
    Show your strength  
It's not a conspiracy as you think  
Trials and tribulations, hatred and strife  
These are only a small part of life

Sister, be a solider with me  
    Show your versatility  
The glamour queen, the thug out chick  
The psycho, the fiend even the buck tooth chick

Sister, be a solider with me  
    Stick it out  
If you want to be a winner  
    Please don't punk out  
    There is nothing that bad  
That you should have to turn the lights out



**MY SPIRIT IS STRONG**  
*Keisha Smith*

It stands out in my mind, that it makes an impression on me.  
Life experiences somehow always lead to numerous difficulties  
and inflict emotional pain, leaving scars that firmly shape me.  
Full of passion and intensity,  
I can beget a sunbeam that gleams ever so fiercely.  
My sight I give at midnight, to stars speckled across the sky  
In any form taken, shining pure colorless light.

“My spirit is strong.”

I come to my senses and want to give love to all,  
Accepting my humility, and rejecting downfall.

I give myself to my homeland in wealth and equality,  
Positive vibes flow from my veins, and energy from my arteries  
Conceiving beauty in the nature of the country,  
As far as consciousness can seize.

Mountains of mundane heights sprout from my loins,  
and balance the earth's sphere.  
My tears sweep through in the form of strong currents,  
and flow into oceans of despair.  
Haunted with rainbows hung far enough out of reach,  
Colorful reflections dance on the surface, enticing me.

Sensibility, not patience is the strongest virtue,  
Allowing me to rise to altitudes of inner truth.  
To spread my wings and soar with ease on the evening breeze,  
It dictates and pilots my flight for life's dream.

“My spirit is strong.”



### AM I LOOKING AT IT...

*Jennifer M. Smith*

Looking at her you would never guess her inner mystery. She dangles an entire new world within my grasp, but I will never be able to reach it. Everyday I pass her, stare at her, and touch her, yet she does not move. Sometimes I wonder what her life is like when no one is looking. It's funny how she is always willing to listen to a friend in need, an exciting story, or just give you a reassuring smile, and never complain. She has definitely helped me through hard times. She has always showed me things that I never saw before. Suddenly I began noticing that her life is more of a reflection of mine. All the things that I held dear to me she had. While I thought that I was looking at her, she was looking at me. My mirror

...Or is it looking at me?

### YOUR SPECTRUM

*Keisha Smith*

In the brightest night,  
With a full moon casting light...  
I lie still, and listen...to the height,  
The height of a still and quiet night.  
It plays on your spectrum, and then you combine,  
Becoming not several shades of light,  
Yet magnificently, pure white light.  
A pure white light...on the brightest night,  
I lie still, silent and listen...to the height of the night.  
Pardon my astonishment,  
Sipped like you are the sweetest wines...  
Divine, a word used only to address your smile.  
And your eyes, in the brightest night,  
Is a full moon casting pure white light  
And I lie and watch your spectrum  
Come to life.





UNTITLED (GRAPHIC DESIGN)

*Samneang Sin*

PHOENIX 2003



**FLOWER (PAINTING)**

*Jing Jin*



## **A CONTEMPORARY ROSE**

*Keisha Smith*

In an age of lost innocence,  
A contemporary rose grows in silence.  
Slow and discreet, with passion intense  
Blood red petals and a soft, slender green stem  
With leaves that tend to curl and spread,  
Beckoning attention to its stunning existence.

Photosynthetic purity and magnetic sincerity,  
It tips its head slightly yet holds on to its majesty.  
A petal sweeps from its crown and falls onto my sympathy  
Leaving me breathless at the thought of its destiny, unavoidable tragedy  
Still, I cannot deny its glory and its identity.

Thirsty for moist admiration,  
Its leaves span farther and wider with satisfaction.  
Seeking to cool its figure and quench its addiction,  
It leans to touch the sun,  
Sends a sweet scent, and confidently dances in rebellion.

## **THE TRIUMPH OF THE SELF**

*Joyann Wilson*

You don't speak and it breeds fear. People scrutinize you with piercing eyes. They demand a reason for silence, as though it were a new religion. They assume that something is troubling you, because in their presence, you must be the familiar stranger, whom you know not of. The birth of a facade, is the death of one's authentic self. It is, however, possible to revive the self via a breath of realization. The one's who try to kill you must depart from their place in your existence, else they fill it with themselves, and you, the self, is discarded into a teenage wasteland. It takes courage to put forth the self, but realize, it is the only way to live.



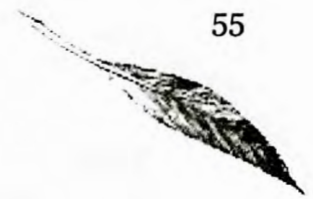
**HARLEM KNIGHT**

*Kadi Conteh*

My Angel  
I fell in love with you  
One cool summer's evening in Harlem  
I saw you, my shining Knight  
You held my hand so gently  
And penetrated my soul with your obsidian eyes  
Your skin was glistening with fabulous glows of ebony  
With a slight trickle of perspiration slithering down the center of your temple  
Shining in the moonlight like molasses  
See my Harlem Knight I want to be consumed by you  
Until I am intoxicated by your taste  
I desire to become one with your soul  
Forever roaming the plains of the Serengeti together  
Without you  
I feel confused  
Left wanting to go astray to love's uncharted territory  
Enticed by your voice low and deep like a drum  
Entranced,  
Controlled by the rhythmic beat of your heart  
Satiated by the infinite memories of your lips  
Round and robust like those of our ancestors' millenniums before us  
I want to live in the center of your Harlem  
Forever with you  
Soul to soul  
Face to face  
Mouth to mouth  
Resuscitate me







**FATHER**  
*Surena Simpson*

*Alana Ruptak*

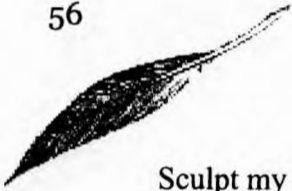
Father what is the real meaning of your game  
Lies, scandal, deceit those should be your name  
You are not my father nor friend or foe  
What shall I call you, I still don't even know

You say you want the best for me  
But all you give me is worries and bags underneath my eyes  
Some people feel I should be thankful for you  
Since you were the one that lied between my mother thighs  
I am thankful for you, for you taught me to rise about the lies  
To be as strong as my mother, as you tried to beat down her pride  
You are a sick individual that can't even decipher your own truth

You are eluded by my smile and my cordial ways.  
Don't let them fool you; I am never going to change.  
I despise you for you act like you care  
For fact of the matter you weren't even there.

Let the past be the past, I know that is what you try to say  
But you forget that what is not settled will come back to bite you in the ass  
I hope it is a lesson well learned  
For thinking so little of your baby girl

Like I said  
Father what is the real meaning of your game  
Are you trying to make for up all that shame?



## PASSAGE

*Emily Dawn Williams*

Sculpt my tombstone with hands passionate and weeping  
 Kiss the face barren of life  
 Resuscitate the vigor with garnet lips  
 Flesh merges with flesh  
 Imprints its pulse  
 Fluids erupt  
 Fingertips to fingertips  
 Once smooth and varnished by youth's waxen coating  
 A moment sketched, engraved  
 Into each wrinkle  
 Evocative of the times that shaped us  
 Barefoot  
 Unveiled  
 Unfettered  
 By limitations or restrictions  
 Linked by an energy that guided us  
 Plummeting the depths of our existence

## DIMENSIONS

*Alisha Mills*

Sometimes  
 I whisper your name when I think of you  
 And then I glance at a distant star  
 Knowing that the light that shines on me  
 Will also shine on you  
 I close my eyes  
 And I breathe hope  
 I breathe joy  
 I breathe freedom  
 I breathe life into my very soul  
 And suddenly  
 When I open my eyes  
 There you are standing beside me  
 You embrace me  
 All my troubles seem to go away  
 You kiss me  
 And a ray of light shines through to my heart  
 You speak to me  
 And your words inspire me  
 Comfort me  
 I long for you  
 And still  
 I long for you





**MERCY AND MALICE**  
**(GRAPHIC DESIGN/PHOTOGRAPHY)**

*Jessica Elexis Hamilton*







**TRIBUTE TO STEICHEN (PHOTOGRAPH)**

*Emily Dawn Williams*





## UNWANTED VISITOR

*Renee Royceston*

I drove past your house today  
The sun light flickers through the kitchen window  
Perhaps there was laughter, perhaps there was pain  
Yet I drove pass your house just to see

I didn't come in, although I had done so many times before  
The familiar smell from the oven  
Perhaps you were making your famous bread  
Its smell lingered beneath my nose  
The pungent smell stings my brain forcing me into memories  
That I don't want to remember  
Like your fragrance it is unforgettable  
A recurrent cloud of smoke, which inhibits my brain  
Making me hazy throughout the day

I want to come inside  
Your house  
To be part of your bread  
To be part of your life  
Why won't you let me?  
Why must you break bread with others  
Sharing fragmented pieces of yourself  
With it is my skin that needs your touch  
The endless feel of your hands molding me  
Endless rolls of pleasure, in your bed, in your house

I drove past your house tonight  
The curtains were drawn to shield out the forbidden night  
Are you asleep?  
Is she awake?  
Perhaps I will come back later when your curtains are open  
Open to an unwanted visitor



**BIRDS ON WIRE (PHOTOGRAPH)**

*Tara Devlin*



## SCHOOL DAYS

*Jane-Ellen Smith*

Integrate this  
Integrate that  
Who do they think I am?

They give me this  
I take that  
I don't know which way to turn?

All I know is  
I better shape up  
And learn to integrate that

You read this  
You reflect on that  
You talk to this on and that

You feel like you're pulled  
You know you are stretched  
You're tossed this way and that  
It makes no difference what you say  
No matter what you do  
All they care about is integrating you.

## [HAVE YOU EVER SEEN]

*Natara P. Hamilton*

Have you ever seen the undisturbed innocence of a child that neither reality nor experience has tarnished? Have you ever desired the impossible and then become angry you didn't get it? Have you ever lied to yourself? Have you ever been unhappy with the truth so you chose to ignore it? Has your heart ever shattered and your earth quaked? Have you ever questioned yourself and regretted the things you didn't do? Have you ever played with a flame, then cried when the pain of the slow burn finally reached your brain? Have you ever been alone? Have you ever looked at a sleeping baby and wished you could start over? Have you ever wanted to try?



## WHERE FANTASY LIVES

*Samantha Young*

*Is your real name Alice?* That seems to be the question of the day. Sometimes I just want to look at people and say, "Yes, StoryLand sends out a national call to all women named Alice just to do this ride, so we don't have to be deceitful. Of course everything at StoryLand is real." I am not quite sure what made me want to work at a children's amusement park. Perhaps it was the enormous number of kids from my high school who worked there that made it so appealing. Why was the place so goddamned cool?

You would think a summer job has to be great for a person to go back to it for four years. I even quit my job at Subway to work at StoryLand. The funny part about StoryLand was I hated my job. I hated doing rides. I hated smiling anonymously at people through the facade of a happy teenager. I don't know why we think we are fooling these people. Who has ever really heard of a happy teenager? Well, we had about 100 of them in the rides department. The faces eventually began to run together for me. Sometimes the large, friendly smiles reminded me of Stephen King's *IT*, played by Tim Curry. It sent shivers up my spine.

My last summer at StoryLand was so different from the previous three. I was in a new department called AM/PM maintenance. Basically, I was one of our boss' seven bitches, and I was the only girl on my team. This would not have been a problem except

I had attended the College of New Rochelle the previous months and being there had opened my eyes to our wonderful culture a bit. For the first time ever, I felt my gender as a handicap. What a wonderful realization- in America I am not worth close to as much as a four hundred pound, fat, sweaty man. Even if he is lazy and I am not, kind of like my teammate Jared. Well, he has friends in low places all right, but one of my best friends was one of our surrogate bosses. Fortunately for me, I was placed in charge of Jared often.

He wouldn't smile as much those days. That made it all worth it. I wasn't the only one frowning at children as they skipped merrily down the paths. I couldn't help it. The evil little imps sucked you for all you were worth and then had their moms and dads take a whack at you. I am never being a mother.

StoryLand has a chapel on the hill across from our Swiss Hilltop Theatre. This chapel claims to be entirely open to all religions, however Jesus is hanging on the wall and there is an open King James Bible. I swear sometimes that the Catholic religion is a damn monopoly up there. I wonder what it would be like to be a Buddhist monk walking in there for meditation, since it is a temple of sorts, and being interrupted by thousands of screaming brats. I suppose my department at StoryLand makes a lot of noise. One day I was instructed to weed whack





around Cinderella's castle, since it was overgrown. Poor Cinderella sneezed all day; it was really kind of funny.

Every two months we had a review of how we were doing at cast members. The only thing I ever really got in trouble for was not smiling enough. I suppose my will is too strong to be brainwashed by those stupid orientation videos. Sometimes I looked at my cohorts and wondered if there really was a soul behind that blank smile. Usually I doubted it. StoryLand had begun to take mine too. But I loved every moment of it. At least I learned some very valuable lessons for life. The fives S's are safe, smooth, smiling, spotless and service (safety being of the utmost importance). Prince Charming is stiff from too much horseback riding yesterday (he is a statue we expect people to think is real, sometimes I want to say, "boy, he looks stoned!"). And of course I must always remember that StoryLand can build the most beautiful theme park in the world, but it takes people like me to make the magic come alive.

I hate to say it, but after all happy memories, I am so fucking happy to never have to tell a guest she is standing in front of a bathroom when she asks where there is one. I have once had a person offer me a cold beer while I was shoveling dirt out of the way for a new path this summer. Suddenly the irony of my life hit me. I shoveled for nine hours straight that day, pulling in a whopping \$7.20 an hour. I realized if

I would sell my body to StoryLand for only \$7.20 an hour, I could probably make more selling my soul to Satan. I mean, what is the difference, really? It is hard to get out through smiling, plastic features that someone's kid is too small for a ride.

Oh my God, I paid \$19 to get in here.

*Sorry, ma'am, but you paid an overall admission to the park, and your kid can't go on this ride.*

I want to speak to your manager.

*Okay, ma'am, no problem. This is the part where I wish I could fly off the handle and say something like, Okay ma'am; I will call my manager to tell you to treat your kid better. I apologize for caring more about your kid's safety than you. After all, it is my job to make up for neglectful parents like you. Our number one priority is safety, after all. Then I would say, fuck you, you blind consumer.*

Who would pay \$19 to get into a children's theme park with only 18 rides which all had a wait of an hour? Sometimes I wonder why heroes go westward. Maybe that is where I need to be, off of the East Coast. I don't know. But when I started waking up in the middle of the night letting imaginary people on my bed to ride *The Great Balloon Chase* I realized I needed to get out of there. It was time. My mother told me you could only hate something as much as you love it. Let me tell you, I was absolutely in love with StoryLand. Definitely in love.



**TASTE (INTAGLIO WITH AQUATINT)**

*Ingrid Staats*



## CHARADE

*Cara Levine*

Countdown: 3 months left to Graduation

Where there had once been desperate excitement, now there is only the familiar unease. The only sound within the coldly quiet room is the unsteady huffs of his deep labored breaths. She rubs her arms absently in an attempt to ward off a sudden chill. She is sitting on the edge of the bed now, while her fingers deftly pull the smooth buttons of her favorite sweater through narrow holes and her eyes stare at the floor. The carpet is a threadbare dingy green. There are countless dark telltale stains that hint at the carpet's sordid history.

Tell me again... Why you love me?

Carmen begged prettily, her heart beating faster with every silent second that ticked by; her doubts growing stronger.

"Why do you always need me to say it? You know how I feel." Jon replied after a time. His frustration was clear.

Silent tears rolled down Carmen's cheeks as she bent down to pick up her haphazardly strewn clothes one by one. Because she felt suddenly shamed by her nudity, she turned her back to him and struggled to put on the shockingly sheer red panties that he had earlier torn off with such abandon.

And here we are again. With dry eyes, Carmen now watches as a noisy blue truck meanders into a nearby parking space across from their motel room. The large brightly-lit neon sign opposite her proudly asserts the existence of countless vacancies, cable tv and in-room toilets. Closing her eyes tightly, Carmen turns

from the window wishing it all away and returning to the present. It was already well after one. Her lunch break had been over an hour ago.

"I have to go."

He stood up then. All his clothes are neatly in place. Briefly, Carmen wonders when he had put them back on or if he had even taken them off in the first place.

He was a tall man; slender. His hair was beautifully dark and full. And his eyes were a deep chocolate brown and lushly lashed. He was beautiful.

"When do you have off again?" Jon asks with careless interest.

His goes over to the nighstand that boasts both a tattered orange lamp and suprisingly well-used bible and reaches for the 14 karat gold watch that he had had the forethought to put aside.

Carmen had bought him the watch last Christmas.

"I'm not sure yet. Saturday, maybe." He shrugs into his jacket and cocks his head consideringly.

"I'll be free on Wednesday night. How about you get here around 11?"

"I'm working Wednesday night." Carmen distantly wonders if he'll suggest another day

"O.K. Well...", He strolls out before finishing the statement, his suitcase swung negligently across his left shoulder.

Carmen trails behind him, hoping he'll say more. She watches as he walks briskly to his car and stops short. His





car is a gleaming, viciously clean blue. It is as obviously out of place within the motel parking lot as he is. He turns back then, his eyes dark and empty.

"I'll call you."

Carmen wondered what he saw when he looked at her that could make his eyes so cold.

Then she rubs her arms again and shrugs saying, "Okay."

Carmen goes back into the room to collect the rest of her things. Carmen can't tell what. Every counter top and surface, no matter how aged or scarred is spotless. The room is a clear indication that Marge prizes cleanliness above all else. Marge has spent more time in this kitchen than any other area of the house. Even though Carmen hesitates before she enters the room, she has had her mouth set for some blueberry yogurt all day and needs to get to the fridge. She is just about to slip back out the door when Marge says,

"Someone called for you."

Carmen knows better than to ask who. Her mother rarely tried to keep track of that type of information. She just nods and continues to head up stairs. Whoever it was would just have to call back. Her room is the second one on the right. Her older brother, Sam whose room was right across from hers had moved away about a year ago to live in Baltimore. He had moved out just 4 months before Alan. Sam was managing a Blockbuster now. He said he was happy.

The first thing Carmen does when she enters her room is flop down exhausted on to her bed. She's been on her feet for over 11 hours. Carmen goes to Hamilton High during the day and works at the

Robinson drugstore in the evenings and on weekends. Carmen is now in her senior year. When the phone rings, she picks it up on the second ring. Marge has a habit of forgetting when she's home. When Carmen hears a familiar male voice, she hesitates before introducing herself.

"Hi. It's Carmen" She says though she is unsure what exactly she should say next.

"Can you put your mother on the phone?" is his reply. He has never spoken to Carmen since that day. They became strangers then. And though the legal ties that had made them stepdaughter and stepfather had never really been broken; they were nothing to each other now.

Before Carmen has a chance to call downstairs, her mother picks up on another line. Carmen listens for a moment before gently placing the phone on the cradle. Her mom sounded like a different person when she talked to Alan. Her voice was always so soft and feminine.

Looking at the calendar that was hanging on the opposite side of the room, Carmen tries to mentally calculate how long it's been since Alan has been gone. It had been October then. She had just been starting school again. That was almost seven months ago. They had had a fight. The last fight and then he had left.

She couldn't be sure but Carmen sometimes thought that he might have moved to Florida. He and Marge had always talked about retiring there. Carmen and her Mom never discussed it or him. Carmen sometimes wondered why her Mom hadn't gone with him. But then she promptly remembered. Marge had stayed because Carmen was her daughter.

\* \* \* \* \*





"Mom, I'm not gonna be getting home until late on Wednesday. Ok?"

Carmen glances up when Marge passes her bedroom doorway. Carmen is kneeling on the floor lacing up her Nikes. Marge is just about to leave for work and glances back impatiently.

"What did you say?" Marge asks though her mind is already on the millions of details she has to see to today. Marge works part time at the Red Rooster. She mostly took the job because she needed to do something to fill the time when Alan had left.

Carmen doesn't bother to sigh but repeats the statement with reasonable patience.

"I'm gonna be in late on Wednesday." Carmen almost added that she needn't wait up but doubted that the caution would be necessary. Marge notices the lack and then asks with subsequent concern.

"So, why will you be late?" Both understand that the reason was not particularly important.

"I'm going to Mona's to study. I have a big exam on Thursday."

Marge looks at Carmen narrowly and nods. "Alright then."

\*\*\*\*\*

It was early morning when Carmen began to gather up her clothing. Thin white light peeked through the curtained windows and fell isolated onto the disheveled sheets of the king size bed. He stood alone on the other side of the bed. He has just finished buckling his belt. She spoke because she couldn't stand the silence anymore.

"I sent out an application for N.Y.U a few months ago. I think I'm gonna be gettin' a response back soon." She could tell he was surprised. But she wasn't sure if it was because she had applied to such a well-known school or because she had simply spoke.

"You think that you might get in?" He asked. Carmen knew that the question was not asked out of malice but because he honestly didn't know if she could.

\*\*\*\*\*

Marge Wright was washing dishes in the kitchen when Carmen got home. Her back is to the door, her eyes distantly trained on something outside the

"I've got good grades. I think my essay was pretty good." A small smirk graced her face then. There weren't many things that Carmen was proud of in her life but that essay had been one of them.

"I didn't know you were thinking of leaving Atlanta." Since Carmen didn't know what to say to that, she remained silent.

This time when she walked out of the motel, he was standing behind her. She stopped when he said her name.

"Good Luck with N.Y.U" Was all he said. In that moment Carmen wanted more than any thing to just be held by him, but because she knew that he would be the first to pull away, she just nodded and kept on walking.

\*\*\*\*\*





Countdown to Graduation: 2 months

"Can you tell me a story?" Little Abbey Martin begged prettily. Looking down at her round eager face, Carmen put aside her textbook and pulled Abbey into her lap. She was babysitting for the Martins today. They lived around the corner from Carmen and had two adorable little girls. Dora, the monster was seven and Abbey, the angel had just turned five. Since Dora had exhausted herself in her attempt to drive Carmen crazy, she was already fast asleep at eight in the evening. But Abbey's small eyes still looked bright and alert.

"Okay." Carmen replied as Abbey snuggled deeper into her arms.

"Let's see. What story do you want to hear- Dora & the seven dwarfs, Little Red Abbey or...?"

"What about Carmen's Story?" Abbey questioned as she stuck her thumb into her mouth. Nodding, Carmen rested her head gently atop Abbey's and tried to remember where she should begin the story.

"Okay, well., I'll start from the very beginning then. Once upon a time in a land far far far away there was this girl named Carmen. For a long long time, she lived in a small house in the forest with her mother. Then one day, a king from another far away land saw her mother and fell instantly in love with her. So, the king took Carmen and her mother to live with him in his castle. Carmen's mother became a Queen and she a princess. There was only one problem, Carmen was not used to living under the rule of a king. The King and Carmen had many disagreements. The Queen grew very displeased and decided to send Carmen to the coldest corner of the kingdom. In this place there was no warmth or light. The Queen hoped

that in this place Carmen would ....., "

Carmen trailed off then. Abbys once bright eyes were now slumberous and droopy. "We never do reach the end of Carmen's story, do we angel? That's alright, one day we will." Carmen pressed a soft kiss to the little girl's forehead and carried her to bed.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Just tell me why then?" Mona Hastings questioned relentlessly as she absently flipped through her latest copy of *Style* magazine and watched her friend through long wispy bangs.

"I don't know. I just can't." Carmen replied irritably as she kicked off her sneakers and tucked her hair into a neat pony tail.

"What's the problem? All he does is make you unhappy. Why can't you just chuck him and start over from scratch?" Mona finished with relish. Mona changed boy-friends as often as others might change underwear. She had zero-boyfriend tolerance.

"I love him." Carmen answered simply.

"No. You love being unhappy. But I think it's time you finally woke up and took some responsibility for your life. How can you let him treat you like this?"

"Don't be practicing your Freudian techniques on me. I know for a fact that you failed Psych 101."

"Alright, then just tell me one thing. Does he love you?" Mona asked as she set the magazine down to stare solemnly at her best friend.

"I can make him love me." Carmen declared, her eyes dark and filled with something that Mona was afraid to define. She knew with a certainty that Carmen was going to get hurt, it was only a matter of time.



"There's your first mistake. You can't make him do anything. How can you make him love you when he doesn't even know you?"

"It's just gonna take time, that's all."

"Carmen, you've given him 2 years of your life. How much more time are you gonna waste?"

\* \* \* \* \*

Her socks had somehow gotten lost amid the unruly tangle of the covers. He was sitting at the foot of the bed, buttoning his shirt when she found them. Carmen wipes suddenly damp hands on to her pant legs and walks toward him.

"I was thinking that I might go out for my birthday." She is looking at the back of his head.

She sees him nodd. "Oh yeah?"

Even though he can't see her, Carmen nods along with him. "Yeah. Maybe invite a few friends." He shrugs then and reaches for his jacket.

"You're invited if you want." Carmen casually imparts as she struggles into the straps of her bra.

"Maybe. When's your birthday?"

"In like two weeks."

"Well, let me know." Carmen smiles, then John looks at her. He has never before noticed how shy or young she looks when she smiles fully. For a moment he feels regret for the way things have been between them, then the moment passes and he is Jon again. Jon, who didn't feel things as other people did. Jon who was alone and content to remain so. He walks out the motel room without saying goodbye or making promises of another meeting.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Someone named John called." Carmen stops at the kitchen doorway long enough to glance up at her mother in surprise.

"What?"

"Someone named John called." Marge repeats as she continues to clean her vegetables in the sink.

Carmen shrugs, saying "Ok. Thankx." Then continues walking past the door.

"Who is this John?" Marge asks

Carmen stops and walks back to the kitchen doorway.

"A friend." Carmen now walks over to the kitchen table and pulls out a chair to sit down.

"From school?"

"No, he used to manage the Blockbuster on Lancaster and Rhodes."

"What does he do now?"

"He works in the main office. He's a District Manager." Carmen didn't know what a District Manager did. She only knew that the position didn't make Jon any happier than being a regular store manager.

"You do know that you have to be careful nowadays." Marge says. Carmen nods in understanding now. "I know." It makes Carmen feel good to think that Marge might be worried about her.

"You know if you get pregnant, there's nothing that I can do. And he'll be long gone." Carmen nods again in newfound understanding and starts to head up stairs.

"Don't worry, Ma. I know."

\* \* \* \* \*



5 weeks and counting.

The phone never rang. She had waited all night but it never rang. He had said that he would come. He hadn't even called her.

"We can go out, just me and you. What? You don't want to hang out with just me?" Mona had asked but she had been too wrapped up in her own misery. He hadn't even called. Now it was Tuesday. Four days after her birthday and she still hadn't heard from him.

He had never been mean before; thoughtless and careless, yes but never mean. Mona had asked her what the difference was.

Carmen had told her love was the difference.

Then Mona had said,

"But he doesn't love you." It had never felt more real until that very moment. In that moment the truth became all too real. Even worse than the truth was the sudden realization that he might never love her.

\* \* \* \* \*

You're old enough now. I've been as good a mother as you've deserved. I've done my best by you. No one could ask for more than that. And now this is my chance to be happy."

"You're leaving?" Carmen couldn't believe it. Even though she had always questioned the reasons why Marge had stayed, she had never really thought that she would actually leave her; leave her alone. Marge was leaving her for him.

"You've always been such a selfish child, but this is my time now. You'll be

fine. You know how to take care of yourself. I taught you that." She was already packed. Her bags sat neatly by the door.

"Yeah, you taught me that."

"Don't look at me like that. I've never risen my hand to you, never hurt you. You've been free to do whatever you like."

"Yeah, because after he left you didn't care one way or another." Marge's anger spew forth like water from a faucet.

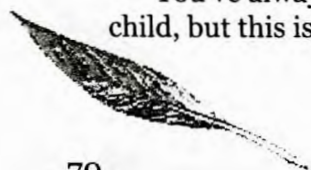
"You were the reason that he left. You never respected him. You never even tried to get along with him. No one wanted this but you made it impossible for us to live together. Don't you feel even a little bit guilty about what you drove us to? But I was your Mama, so I stayed. I stayed and waited. But I can't do this anymore. I can't pretend."

"There was no pretence, Mama. I always knew that you were just biding your time. So, go ahead. Be free. Be Happy. Do whatever it was that you thought I was holding you back from." Hot tears rolled down Carmens cheeks as she watched her mother neatly gather up her belongings.

"You can stay here until summer but after that I'm selling the house." Marge imparted sensibly, as she took out a pair of spare keys and laid them on the foyer table.

"I suggest you put them somewhere practical, because I won't be here if you need someone to let you in."

\* \* \* \* \*





## Graduation Day

He watched her from his seat in the back of the auditorium. He hadn't told her he was coming because he hadn't wanted her to know. Some times he wondered if it wasn't because he hadn't wanted to disappoint her again. She graduated with honors. He hadn't known that she was that smart. The woman sitting next to him was wiping at her eyes and sniffing noisily. Jon reaches in his pocket to get her a tissue. She tearfully thanks him.

"Who are you here for?" She asks. He looks up at the stage again before speaking.

"Carmen Wright." The woman smiles, "Oh, you know her? My son, Steve talks about her all the time. He says that she's probably the most popular girl in school." His Carmen? Jon remains silent since he doesn't know what to say. The woman continues to talk.

"Smart and popular, that's what he says. I think he may have the smallest crush on her." The woman is suddenly chagrined when an sudden idea occurs to her.

"Oh. Are you her boyfriend?"

"No." John says. "I'm not."

\*\*\*\*\*

"I've been accepted to NYU." Carmen couldn't remember the last time she had a conversation with Jon fully clothed. Jon now stands next to window as she had just months before. Carmen wondered if he was seeing the same picture that she had.

"When are you leaving?" He asks.

"In another week."

"What will you do?"

"I've saved up enough money to tide me over until I find a job there. And I'm supposed to be getting a partial scholarship, so that should take off the edge a little."

"Sounds like you've got it all worked out."

"I've been thinking about this for a long time. My friend, Mona was accepted too, so I won't be homesick alone." Carmen didn't mention how love sick she would be. For a brief moment, Carmen wonders if he will ask her to stay. She then wonders what she would say if he asked. Jon knows that he would never ask Carmen to stay because he could never give her a good enough reason.

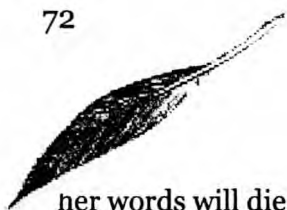
"Maybe I'll come to N.Y and see you sometime." He said before walking out to his car. That was the last promise to Carmen that Jon ever made.

\*\*\*\*\*

"....,The day came when Carmen was freed from the Coldest Part of the Kingdom, but both the King and Queen were still highly displeased with her. The King told Carmen that the only way to please him was to do as she was told and wait for the prince who she was to marry. But Carmen was never good at doing what she was told. And she had learned a great deal during her exile. She decided that she wasn't ever gonna make the Queen and King except her and she wouldn't marry until she found someone who could love her as every person deserved to be loved. She would never settle for anything ever again. And she lived happily ever after. The End." Abby sat up in bed, her face wreathed in smiles.

"I liked that story, Carmen. Tell it again."

\*\*\*\*\*



## DEATH OF A POET

*Ewa Tabak*

her words will die when she is not around  
 so will the desk she used to sit at  
 to let her pen dance on the paper  
 to give the thoughts the shapes that they deserved  
 and never reaching ones that they intended  
 yet always hoping for the day to come

her words will live because she is not around  
 printed in lines that drank the same red wine  
 minds struggling with days of imperfection  
 dealing with nights that hid the daily sin  
 since she is not around her words will be  
 never receiving any criticism  
 from any extraordinary people  
 who did not use to drink the same red wine

## NOTES ON GOODBYE

*Richelle Fiore*

The typed letters line the page testing all who see.  
 Where do you end a relationship that begins in the dark?  
 Can hushed conversations withhold amplification?  
 How to answer when  
 The whisper of you and I will  
 Never birth the permanence of us.

Can you end something that never truly began?  
 What if the quest yields  
 Not an artifact to report the future of our existence?  
 No ring, no kids, or even a dog.  
 Nothing, but memory.  
 The flames flicker as  
 The wax wanes on you and I.

Will I able to shove stolen moments in a gilded frame?  
 The shadowy myth you will become must offer comfort someday.  
 When did the responsibility of parting gifts fall upon  
 The failing contestant?

Quizzing becomes my entitlement,  
 These are the questions you get to ask  
 Only after you have decided to say goodbye.



